

## Cosmogynesis: the female hero in Tanith Lee's *The winter players*

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The mass-appearance of female heroes in popular culture in recent decades may encourage the opinion that the female hero has achieved the same credibility as her male counterpart. This article demonstrates, however, that she continues to generate ambivalence and that the primary reservation of most scholars is that a female hero either cannot or should not perform the masculinity of the archetype. Scholarly arguments tend towards two positions: that a female hero is an oxymoron; or that she should be limited to battles on behalf of women in which she champions feminine characteristics and challenges the belief that femininity is not heroic. Neither of these positions take archetypal heroism into account. Advocating a return to Jungian archetypal theory, I argue that the masculinity of the archetype may be as successfully performed by a female hero as by a male hero. Once this premise is accepted, the female hero should be expected to undergo the same trials and perform the same function as a male hero, in short, she should navigate the heroic monomyth outlined by Joseph Campbell. I illustrate this point through a literary analysis of Tanith Lee's 1976 fantasy novella *The winter players*.

**Keywords:** female hero, archetypal hero, Tanith Lee, feminist fantasy, Joseph Campbell, female masculinity

The hero arguably dominates popular literatures through myth, legend and fairy tale into our contemporary era of graphic novels and action movies. As a figure who answers the psychic call of his or her socio-historical context, this hero is governed by what his or her culture believes a hero should be and do; historically, western culture has favoured a male hero doing 'manly' things. For this reason, those who have sought to study the female hero have found her an elusive and difficult subject. In early texts, she appears rarely and is treated as an anomaly. More recently, however, and possibly as a result of twentieth-century feminism, she bursts forth in a multitude of images. And yet, for all her visibility in contemporary popular culture, the female hero continues to generate ambivalence among theoreticians who disagree about what she should do, how she should behave and what constitutes 'female heroism'. Generally, these points of contention spring from two overarching sources: firstly, the term 'hero' is seldom clearly defined; and, secondly, a widespread scepticism of the female hero's masculinity continues to undermine her plausibility. This scepticism surfaces in studies that valorise the female hero's performance of femininity, arguing that she should have her own 'feminine', female hero's journey that does not adhere to the monomyth (the pattern of heroic action demonstrated by the archetypal hero). This trend runs contrary to progressive developments in contemporary gender studies, which show that masculinity and femininity are performed equally across male and female bodies. It also perpetuates the divide between what is expected of male heroes and what is expected of female heroes, rather than fostering equality. In order to counter this trend, I argue that discussions of the female hero should return to the archetype and archetypal theory, which demonstrate that there should be no difference between what female and male heroes do: both should navigate the same monomyth, meet the same challenges and achieve the same outcome prescribed by the archetype. Effectively, archetypal theory allows me to argue that the sex of the hero is entirely secondary to their heroism. A return to Jungian archetypal theory is useful not only because it offers a clear definition of archetypal heroism but because, in recognising that the archetype may be represented by either sex, it challenges the gender-bias in current scholarship.

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In order to position my argument, the first section of this article outlines Jung's theory of archetypes, focusing on the hero. I then discuss the manner in which this archetype promotes gender-fluidity, requiring, as it does, that the hero perform masculinity and femininity (Campbell 1993:152-153), a condition that dovetails with contemporary theoretical stances regarding the performativity of gender. Given the gender-fluidity encouraged by the archetype, one should expect studies of the hero to reflect a nuanced approach to gender but, unfortunately, this is not always the case: male heroes are often lauded primarily for their performance of masculinity and female heroes are still too often expected to champion a femininity that, alone, cannot support archetypal heroism. The second section of my argument briefly sketches the current state of this debate and traces the continuing wariness of the female hero's masculinity to a pervasive and outdated belief that masculinity is still best performed by men. While these theorists argue that the female hero must establish her own heroic pattern rather than following that set out by male heroes, I contend the opposite: like the male hero, she should be held to the archetypal pattern of the monomyth. I then demonstrate that the female hero can perform the masculinity and femininity of the archetype, and discuss how this enables her to successfully navigate the challenges of the archetypal monomyth through a brief, literary-archetypal analysis of Tanith Lee's 1976 heroic-fantasy novella *The winter players*. In this section, I apply Joseph Campbell's delineation of the monomyth to the adventure of Lee's protagonist. I use Campbell's model here, rather than those proposed by Raglan or Jezewski, precisely because his pattern may be applied to both male and female heroes, where theirs are tailored specifically to men (Raglan 1937) or women (Jezewski 1984), and therefore exercise outdated gender expectations.

I return to Lee's relatively early feminist fantasy for a number of reasons. The first is that fantasy creates a literary space in which the timeless patterns of myth may resurface, its universal themes re-presented for the modern world (Le Guin 1989:62). As such, this genre is particularly suited to the study of archetypes and archetypal heroism. The second reason is that, since the 1960s, feminist fantasy and science fiction – together, speculative fiction (SF) – have offered alternatives to the images of (passive, defenceless, unheroic) women that have dominated the western imagination, resisting 'the reproduction of the stories that patriarchal societies tell about women and instead [envisioning] stories that thoroughly displace them' (Cortiel 1999:5). Lee's novella contributes to this feminist SF project to claim new narrative possibilities for female characters so that, along with other authors of early feminist SF such as Joanna Russ and C.L. Moore, her writing lays crucial groundwork for a contemporary engagement with archetypal female heroism. The third reason I return to this text is that Lee structures her female hero's journey along the lines of Joseph Campbell's monomyth (his plotting of the archetypal hero's journey). Her protagonist thus faces the same challenges, undergoes the same development, and achieves the same results expected of a male archetypal hero, proving that a female character can perform the actions and function of the archetype.

Before going any further, and because the term 'hero' is used so broadly today, it is necessary to clarify from the outset that the subject of this article is the archetypal hero. Often academic (and other) discussions of heroes and heroism become problematic because authors do not distinguish between human bravery and archetypal heroism. These are different things altogether – the archetype plays a specific psycho-symbolic role and its actions and effects thus transcend everyday human reality. The archetype may (and should) inspire human bravery, but human bravery – whether displayed by men, women or 'realistic' fictional characters – should seldom be discussed in terms of archetypal heroism. It is therefore necessary to define the term 'archetype' and clarify the manner in which I use it throughout this article.

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## Archetypes and the Hero

In 1919, Jung introduced the term ‘archetypes’ to describe abstract psychic schemas such as the Mother, the Anima (the feminine), the Animus (the masculine), the Shadow, the Hero and so on (Rowland 2002:10) which give form to human emotional experiences (Vannoy-Adams 1997:101). According to Jung, these archetypes exist in the personal unconscious of individuals and in the collective cultural unconscious, both of which render them into images that speak to the individual and society invoking them. Michael Vannoy Adams writes that

No other term is more basic to Jungian analysis than ‘archetype’; and yet no term has been the source of so much definitional confusion. Part of the reason is that Jung defined ‘archetype’ in different ways at different times. Sometimes, he spoke of archetypes as if they were images. Sometimes he distinguished more precisely between archetypes as unconscious forms devoid of any specific content and archetypal images as the conscious content of these forms. (101)

Most contemporary Jungian theorists would thus agree to define archetypes as ‘purely formal, categorical, ideational potentialities that must be actualised experientially’ (Vannoy Adams:102) through archetypal images which express aspects of the archetype but cannot encompass the whole. Following this, I use the terms ‘archetype’ and ‘hero’ to refer to the unformed ideational potentiality, and the adjective ‘archetypal’ when discussing something ‘of the archetype’ as manifested in a specific archetypal image.

However, it is necessary to point out that archetypal images, while allowing for the expression of some cultural or individual preference, do not permit extensive departure from the content of the archetype (Jung 1968:3-41). Therefore, while various cultures and individuals have generated archetypal images of the hero to answer particular needs at particular times, the function of the archetype remains fairly stable. Briefly, the hero is human (or mortal), rejects the stifling status quo of his or her society, and undertakes a quest comprised of specific stages during which he or she is empowered. As a result of this transformative empowerment, the hero achieves a revelatory understanding of self and the world that is ‘eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn’ (Campbell 1993:20). His or her insight into the nature of existence transforms the hero into a catalyst who rings in the cosmogenesis of society upon his or her return from the journey. I entitle this article ‘cosmogynesis’ because the task of the archetypal female hero, like that of her male counterpart, is to ring in the profound transformation or rebirth of her world.

Cosmogynesis is the final task of the hero and the ultimate gift the archetype offers society, but he or she only reaches this point after having navigated the hero’s journey. The journey itself is therefore core to the archetype, both prompting and supporting the hero’s achievement of insight. In his seminal study *The hero with a thousand faces*, Joseph Campbell identifies a ‘standard path’, what he calls a ‘monomyth’ (1993:30) because the journey of every archetypal hero follows the same pattern of ‘a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return’ (35). Campbell then discusses the psycho-symbolic significance of each stage and trial that the hero navigates along the path: as he or she journeys, the hero meets helpful characters and confronts enemies, each of which represent psychological strengths, weaknesses and fears that the hero must acquire, release or resolve in order to move onto the next stage of the journey. Finally, the hero experiences a revelatory Apotheosis – an understanding of himself or herself in relation to existence – that will motivate his or her actions from that point on. In Jungian terms, the hero’s journey thus models the psychological processes of individuation (the achievement of independent agency) and self-actualisation (wisdom, a breadth of perspective that sees the self in relation to eternity) which culminate in a ‘completion of the self’ (Young-Eisendrath 1997:228).

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Salient to my overarching argument is the primary technique through which the hero's journey urges individuation and self-actualisation. Each challenge and interaction along the path is prompted by the compensatory drive of the unconscious, requiring the hero to face something he or she has refused or denied about himself or herself. Jung explains the process thus: the unconscious 'compensates the biases, the partial or even defective attitudes, of the conscious', counterbalancing 'what is repressed (...) ignored or neglected by the conscious' (Vannoy-Adams 1997:107). Thus, when the conscious mind denies some aspect of the self, the unconscious responds with an eruption of the refused material; in real life, this takes the form of disturbing dreams and the projection of rejected traits onto others. In the hero's journey, this material is externalised and takes the form of settings (castles, forests, swamps) and characters. As the hero engages with these, he or she models methods of dealing with the material brought to light by the unconscious: he or she integrates alienated aspects of his or her psyche, nurtures undeveloped strengths, resolves complexes and overcomes fears, and finally earns the agency and wisdom of an individuated and actualised Self.

### **Jung's Theory of Archetypes, the Hero, and Gender-fluidity**

The hero archetype therefore specifically promotes the development of a balanced, healthy psyche. And because, in Jungian terms, a healthy psyche is conditional 'on the synthesis of what had previously been discriminated [against] and divided' (Salman 1997:54) from the self into the self, the hero defies the strict western imperative that masculinity is the purview only of men, and femininity, that of women.

Like most theoretical disciplines that address the issue of gender, contemporary Jungian theorists distinguish between biological sex (male and female bodies) and gender (the performance of femininity and masculinity) (Young-Eisendrath 1997:225; Rowland 2002:40). Implicit in this distinction is the recognition that sex does not dictate gender, and that either sex may perform behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity. Goodwill describes the 'ways of thought and behaviour that [have] traditionally been considered masculine' as 'claiming the right to authority, or displaying strength, courage, assertiveness, leadership, physicality (and sometimes violence), and very often heroism' (2009:10). These traits can be extended to include symbols associated with archetypal masculinity that express an engagement with external, objective reality, the public world and the self-assertion of the individual. Traits associated with femininity might be 'maternal solicitude and sympathy, the magic authority of the female, the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason, any helpful instinct or impulse, all that is benign, all that cherishes or sustains, that fosters growth and fertility' and also that which 'devours, seduces or poisons' (Jung 2003:125). As with the masculine, these traits may be extended to include symbols of the archetypal feminine which express closeness, relationship, and subjective experience.

Jungian feminisms show that, despite the fact that Jung (a product of his time) believed the essentialist proposition that women are feminine and men are masculine, his hypotheses challenged this stark yoking of gender to sex (Rowland 2002, Young-Eisendrath 1997). Instead, he proposed that the psyche of a (traditionally, masculine) man contains within it the archetypal feminine in the figure of the anima, and the psyche of a (traditionally, feminine) woman contains within it the archetypal masculinity of the animus. This formed the core of his hypothesis of contrasexuality, which goes on to outline 'the potential of each sex to develop the qualities and aspects of its opposite (...) through the process of individuation, the completion of the self' (Young-Eisendrath 1997:228).

Contrasexuality is essential to the processes of individuation and self-actualisation because these processes only achieve fulfilment if an individual is able to draw on strengths, characteristics and behaviours associated with both femininity and masculinity. Individuation requires the masculine separation of self from home, the courageous and aggressive pursuit of the unknown and action in the

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face of danger; self-actualisation requires the synthesis of the skills acquired during individuation with the feminine traits of nurturance, compassion and community. And, like all psychic complexes that require balancing, the development of contrasexuality is prompted by the compensatory drive of the unconscious. Thus, the anima in the unconscious of a very masculine male will be triggered and manifest itself to him; if these urgings are ignored, the anima will become more strident, taking on shadow aspects of the feminine until he integrates its alienated characteristics into his conscious self. Similarly, the unconscious of a feminine female will urge the development of masculine traits, a masculine female may be required to develop her femininity, a feminine man, his masculinity and so on.

In this way, the healthy Jungian psyche promotes gender-fluidity in men and women, urging the interplay of masculine and feminine behaviours and traits so that men and women can adopt various gender positions appropriate to real-life situations and challenges. This is precisely what the hero calls for: masculine skills and behaviours are needed to meet certain challenges; feminine skills and behaviours are needed to meet others. In order to complete his or her journey successfully, the hero must therefore have undergone a contrasexual education that enables him or her to access the entire range of gendered behaviours that exist in the unconscious mind.

This aspect of the hero foregrounds one of the salient traits of archetypes: while the anima and animus are gender-specific, all other archetypes are 'plural and androgynous, meaning that they can have many shapes and can be equally feminine or masculine' (Rowland 2002:30). An archetype may therefore appear in male form, female form, as young or old, as an abstract symbol, an animal or force of nature and will be masculine (active) or feminine (receptive) in turns. The Mother, for example, may manifest in dream as a male figure who performs a mothering function and so on. Archetypes are extraordinarily fluid, which makes them able to respond to the minute promptings and needs of an individual psyche. The relevance of this point to discussions of the hero archetype is obvious: the function of the hero is of primary importance while the biological sex of its manifestation merely reflects the preference of a culture or individual for a certain image. Hence, while the image may be studied as a gauge of cultural pressures, discussions of heroism should focus on whether or not an incarnation successfully performs the function of the archetype. My argument is, therefore, that the female hero should 'do' what the male hero 'does', a contentious point in the current debate on female heroism.

### **The debate: what should a female hero do?**

The first reason that discussions of the female hero tend towards confusion and conflict is, as I said earlier, often due to a failure to define the term 'hero'. Some scholars discuss the archetype and the courage of real women in the same breath and, as a result, neither receive the objective treatment they deserve. A clear example of this is Mirriam F. Polster's 2001 study, *Eve's daughter's: The forbidden heroism of women*. In it she criticises the expectations encouraged by the archetype, arguing that real women cannot possibly live up to male, masculine examples such as Achilles and Superman (2001:2). She does not acknowledge that neither can real men live up to these literary examples or embody the archetype in the literal manner she criticises.

The second reason that discussions of the female hero are so contentious is that much scholarship (generated before and since the advent of feminism) is influenced by the dichotomisation of gender in the west. These perspectives encourage theorists to expect masculinity from male heroes and femininity from female heroes, a division that is at odds with recent developments in gender theory and that fails to take into account the gender-fluidity of the archetype.

At first, this pattern manifests in the generalisation of a masculine male as the heroic model. For example, in the scholarship of the patriarchal west it is a 'given' that heroism is synonymous with men. For

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Thomas Carlyle, the hero is a 'Great Man', the embodiment of 'manhood and heroic nobleness' (1840:3). For G.W.F Hegel, Herbert Spencer, Otto Rank and Lord Raglan, the hero must be male (Segal 2000:18). Joseph Campbell allows for a female hero, but then describes the heroic monomyth using exclusively male examples from myth and literature. In his seminal *Anatomy of criticism*, Northrop Frye proposes a classification of various hero types that appear in romance, myth and tragedy: all are men (1971:33). In his study of *The Iliad*, James Redfield discusses the origin of the term 'hero', which applies solely to warriors who are 'men of clarity and purity' (1975:10). For these scholars, the hero is male and champions an ethic of noble masculinity; the female hero is either invisible or a glitch. This opinion appears even fairly recently: in 1995, John Lash writes that 'The hero is undeniably *he*, the male of the species. Gender is an issue here. (...) The hero has no exact counterpart in the opposite sex, and heroines who act in the manner of the hero are wild anomalies' (5).

Unfortunately, this conflation of heroism with masculinity, and masculinity with maleness also influences the perspective of some feminist studies of the female hero. For second-wave feminist SF theorist, Sarah Lefanu, although some authors attempt 'to reclaim Amazons for women [...] by taking the heroes of sword-and-sorcery tales and giving them breasts', they are unsuccessful because 'they do not necessarily challenge the gender stereotypes that they have reversed' (1989:35). She criticises these heroes for performing masculinity lest they reify ideologies of masculine (and, thereby male) superiority. For Lefanu, the female hero should not adhere to the monomyth, undertaking the hero's journey and battling on behalf of humanity, because 'the constraints against which (...) heroines strive are, quite specifically, those imposed upon women by men' (28). In *The heroine's journey* Maureen Murdock expresses the same sentiment. She writes that 'women have embraced the stereotypical male heroic journey [and a heroic] model that denies who they are' (1990:1-2). Using more essentialist language than Lefanu, she suggests that female heroes should quest 'to fully embrace their feminine nature, learning how to value themselves as women and to heal the deep wound of the feminine' (3).

Jack Zipes criticises the movies *Mirror mirror* (2012) and *Snow White and the huntsman* (2012) for suggesting 'that women must compromise their femininity to succeed'; he argues that, because the female characters in these films don pants and wield swords as men do, these films suggest that 'to become a true woman, you must first become a man' (in Jacques 2014:151). His point, like those expressed above, is that female heroes should be feminine and that their performance of masculinity in some way threatens this 'natural' femininity. In 2010, Rene Fleischbein laments the lack of 'real female heroes' in children's literature, writing that 'There are too few true female heroes – girls who are active, adventurous, intelligent, just and independent – in literature. Other female heroes are not really female; they are boys who have had a feminine name given to them' (2010:235). Her statement is something of a conundrum, given that prior to the feminist revolution of the twentieth century 'active, adventurous, just and independent' are adjectives that would have applied to boys, not girls. It remains unclear how girl heroes should remain 'really female'.

In 2014, Lori M Campbell, editor of *A quest of her own: Essays on the female hero in modern fantasy*, writes that the aim of the collection is to discover how authors 'uniquely define the female hero so that she "need not mimic the male hero's journey [but] prevail on [her] own terms" (Barron 31)' (ed. Campbell 2014:5). This theme runs through many of the essays: the battle for gender equality is often foregrounded over archetypal heroism and Campbell's conclusion is that one of the female hero's tasks is to '[rescue] stereotypically feminine traits from the negative connotations that might previously have compromised perceptions of her heroism' (284). Sharon Blackie's 2016 *If women rose rooted*, specifically champions gender-essentialist heroism. Blackie attributes the 'wasteland' of modern western culture to the fact that women have been denied a feminine hero's journey (2016:16). Like Murdock before her, she advocates healing 'the wounded feminine' through a heroic quest in which women claim

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authentic lives of empowered femininity. For Blackie, and others who care to define the feminine heroic ethic, it manifests in traits such as relationship, an intuitive, bodily communion with the Earth, an innate feel for healing and a reverence of all life.

The common thread that runs through these discussions of the female hero is a belief that she should be different from the male hero, that she should champion an ethic that reflects, or is derived from, her femininity; a female hero who performs the feats expected of the male hero is merely a 'boy with a girl's name'. Although hardly exhaustive, this brief overview of scholarship on the female hero reflects a troubling trend. It is easy to understand why so many theorists react strongly to the female hero's performance of masculinity: they contend that her primary task should be encouraging a re-evaluation of femininity in a culture that has denigrated it and they mistrust any action that may foster ideologies of masculine (and, by extension, male) superiority. However, the simplistic treatment of gender in studies as recent as the ones mentioned above is problematic. Even in the early eighties, Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope discussed the insidious consequences such thinking might have for the female hero, pointing out that it 'injects patriarchal sex-role assumptions into the discussion of the archetypal hero's journey [which] confuses the issue and obscures the true archetypal elements of the pattern' (1981:4). If the female hero is ever to claim archetypal status, she must be allowed to perform the masculinity that has been the jealously-guarded province of the male hero; she cannot be limited to championing only 'the feminine'.

Gender theorist, Judith Halberstam suggests that the suspicion female masculinity continues to provoke reflects a 'collective failure to imagine and ratify the masculinity produced by, for, and within women' (1998:15). This, despite the efforts of gender theory to challenge the dichotomisation of gender in western culture, which persists in eliding the continuous shifting of gender (Halberstam 1998). Elizabeth Hills points out that 'action heroines have been difficult to conceptualise as heroic characters [precisely because of] the binaristic logic of theoretical models' that hold in discussions of the hero (1999:39). In light of this, Halberstam's project to render female masculinities visible and to foster their acceptance is crucial, not just for the purposes of gender equality but also for studies of the female hero. Halberstam attributes the fact that 'female masculinities are rejected' to the motives of a patriarchal culture that may still want to preserve the appearance of 'male masculinity [as] the real thing' (1), even though, she argues, 'what we understand as heroic masculinity has been produced by and across both male and female bodies' (2). For Halberstam, female masculinity is not as unusual as the theorists above would have us believe; her position is that women have always performed masculinity, drawing on applicable masculine behaviours to navigate the world. If this is indeed the case, it is time that studies of the female hero embrace her performance of masculinity, recognising it as essential to archetypal heroism. As Jessica Salmonson pointed out in 1979, the significance of 'women taking up sword and shield, to a society like our own which is ruled by men, is an act of revolution' (1979:14). When the female hero draws her sword, asserting her claim to active – even aggressive – masculinity, she asserts her right to incarnate the archetype because, like the male hero, she can navigate the challenges of the monomyth successfully only if she is able to draw upon both masculine and feminine strengths. And, I contend, she is only a hero if she navigates the archetypal monomyth.

### **The hero in Tanith Lee's *The Winter Players***

Like the male hero, whether or not a female character deserves the title 'hero' is therefore dependant on how comprehensively the pattern of her tale reflects that of the monomyth. If she undertakes the hero's journey and successfully navigates each trial, developing the strengths and skills associated with masculinity and femininity, confronting the shadow-fears that plague humanity and facilitating the cosmogenesis of her world, she performs the function of the archetype. The protagonist of Tanith Lee's *The winter players* (first published in 1976; references are from the 1988 Beaver edition) is such a hero.

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My analysis of the text thus focuses on how closely Oaive (Lee's protagonist) adheres to Joseph Campbell's delineation of the monomyth. I discuss the psycho-symbolic significance of each challenge she faces and the manner in which she resolves the issue each represents. Tracing her navigation of the monomyth in this manner enables me to show that her heroic struggle matches that of the archetypal hero's in both content and consequence.

Campbell divides the hero's journey into three overarching stages: separation or departure; initiation; and return' (1993:30). Each of these is then subdivided into various tasks or challenges that test the hero: during the Departure, the hero navigates the Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the First Threshold and the Belly of the Whale (51-90). As a stage, the Departure explores the hero's struggle to achieve individuation as he or she leaves home and learns self-reliance. The Departure is, therefore, predominantly marked by the hero's acquisition and integration of masculine agency into his or her psyche, given that masculinity encourages independence and individuality.

The first of the challenges in the Departure is the Call to Adventure. Campbell tells us that the figure who is called to adventure may be royal or of humble birth but always begins the journey as the archetypal Fool: an innocent with much to learn. Often the potential hero is marked by fate as 'different'. From the beginning of the tale, Oaive fits this pattern. When we first meet her, she is young (a teenager) and of humble parentage but we are also told that 'She had been chosen before her birth' (8) to be the priestess of a shrine in her fishing village. This destiny sets her apart from everyone around her: her mother recoils from her, she has no friends and she must abstain from romantic involvement. Her calling to be the priestess marks her as 'different'. It also prepares her for a life of service, much like the life defined by the heroic ethic; in language that recognises duty as paramount, we are told that she knows 'She did not belong to the flock. She was the shepherd' (9).

Prior to the Call to Adventure, the potential hero's life is often limited to domestic activities that keep him or her close to home. The 'closed-circuit', passive quality of this period marks it as a feminine time in contrast to the period of masculine action to come. Lee foregrounds the dominance of the feminine during this stage of Oaive's life with various activities and symbols traditionally associated with femininity and the archetypal feminine. As the priestess of an ocean shrine, Oaive's activities follow the cyclical ebb and flow of ocean tides so that she lives in feminine time, rather than linear, masculine time (Davies 1990:19). She continually paints spirals, evocative of goddess symbolism, on shell talismans. She weaves cloth, recalling female mythical figures such as the Fates, Grandmother Spider and Arachne. She is a healer who nurtures her community, and she belongs to a sisterhood of priestesses stretching back through time.

As is the case with all potential heroes, without outside intervention, feminine passivity might dominate Oaive's life in perpetuity; the Call to Adventure disrupts it. In psycho-symbolic terms, the compensatory drive of the unconscious sounds a call-to-action that disturbs the peaceful pattern of feminine inaction. The figure of the herald who sounds the call is therefore significant. The herald intrudes into the potential hero's life, shocking her into an awareness of a world beyond the one she knows. He/she/it thus becomes a marker of all that is different, all that the hero does not know and because the herald asks nothing less than the potential hero's surrender to transfiguration, he/she/it may be perceived as menacing. The potential hero must decide whether to answer the Call, despite her fear and knowing that her life will never be the same thereafter, or to refuse it.

In Lee's novella, the herald is a stranger who appears in the fishing village. His maleness and his wild, predatory appearance are markers of his difference and, in many ways, he is Oaive's polar opposite. He is masculine and male to her feminine female. She is marked by warmth: her colouring is 'tawny' and her magic takes the form of fire (14). He is cold: his colouring is monochromatic, all grey like a 'winter sea'

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(even his name is 'Grey'), and his power is compared to ice. He comes from somewhere 'beyond the mist' (10) where she has known only the village and shore. This otherness is enough to trigger Oaive's uneasiness, but the wolf pelt he wears and his eyes, which are like 'venomous moons' (20), reinforce his aura of predatory threat. Male, aggressive and foreign, Grey disturbs the stasis in which Oaive has existed. In psycho-symbolic terms, the unconscious has triggered the masculine animus into action in the figure of the herald, forcing Oaive to acknowledge a wider horizon and demanding that she respond to it. When Grey steals one of the relics housed in the shrine, a fragment of bone, he sounds the Call to Adventure and Oaive must decide whether or not to pursue him and retrieve the bone. Her choice will require her to engage with Grey, who represents the active masculinity of her animus, and integrate its agency into herself.

The second task of the Departure, however, allows the potential hero to Refuse the Call, forfeiting her heroic potential. In this tale, two forces have the power to influence Oaive against undertaking the hero's journey: her own fear; and societal pressure. We are told that she is afraid and, because only she knows about the relics of the Shrine, Oaive wonders 'If I never tell of it, who will know?' (21). She could let Grey steal the bone and her life would go on as before. But when she thinks this, she feels a 'dreadful emptiness inside her, as if he had stolen part of her own self' (21). This terrifies her because 'she [sees] her path' (22) and cannot turn from it: her desire to retrieve the bone exceeds her fear. The second force she must overcome is the social pressure to remain with her people. The village Elders argue that 'she [is] abandoning them' (25) just as Winter threatens and Oaive could use their need as a reason to stay. Again, the desire to retrieve the bone is more compelling and 'she [can] do nothing else' (25) but follow Grey.

According to Campbell, once the hero chooses to answer the Call, she receives Supernatural Aid which will guide and protect her during the coming trials (1993:69). Again, Oaive's pattern adheres to that of the monomyth. She decides to pursue Grey but because she does not know how to pick up his trail, she turns to the Shrine, hoping that it will give her a clue. Lee personifies the Shrine here, describing it as 'violated' (25) by Grey and having snatched a piece of his cloak as he escapes with the relic. The Shrine offers this clue to Oaive, its champion, and she is able to intuit his direction because of the link between the scrap and the weave of his cloak. Given the archetypal femininity with which the Shrine is associated, it represents the 'supernatural protection and guidance of the Cosmic Mother' (1993:71) from whom Oaive receives Supernatural Aid. It is interesting to note that the archetypal feminine assists Oaive's pursuit of Grey, the masculine, reflecting that all aspects of the unconscious work together to promote psychological balance and the achievement of individuation and self-actualisation.

The penultimate challenge of the Departure is Crossing the First Threshold. During this trial, the hero enters 'regions of the unknown' (Campbell 1993:79) and must engage with the Threshold Guardian, her first serious adversary. This engagement with the unknown and its guardian continues to foster the hero's individuation from home and her development of agency, encouraging a broader perspective of the world. We are told that Oaive soon enters lands in which 'everything [is] unknown' and 'she [begins] to lose the sense of who she [is]' (27-28): no longer anchored to home, her sense of self becomes another unknown to negotiate in the alien landscape generated by the unconscious. As a healer and priestess, Oaive's sense of self has always been defined by the feminine modes of interrelationship and community but Crossing the Threshold requires her to shift to a masculine understanding of herself as an individual. It falls to Grey, the externalisation of her animus, to facilitate this shift in her perception of herself. One of the ways in which he does this is by denying her human contact, which might undermine her individuation: as he travels he warns people that an evil witch is following him, ensuring that anyone she meets avoids her. Because of this Oaive is forced to act independently and to draw on her magic in innovative ways, testing the breadth of her power and learning self-reliance to overcome the obstacles he leaves in her path.

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As Grey tests Oaive, urging her into independence and agency, he now fills the role of the Threshold Guardian. Only if she proves worthy will she be able to best him and move past the First Threshold to the next stage of the monomyth. In the final test of this stage, the Threshold Guardian nullifies the power of the Shrine's talisman, stripping the hero of Supernatural Aid. In the tale, Grey discards his cloak so that Oaive can no longer track him and, suddenly hopeless and alone, the reader is told that 'everything frightened her, what she had done, what she planned to do (...) the whole world' (36). When Oaive rallies, however, her thoughts mark a significant shift in how she perceives herself. She realises that even without the talisman, 'he [is] still the quarry, she the hunter' (37). In this moment she becomes the aggressor, the hunter, and integrates her animus into herself; this suggests that she is ready to move into the last stage of the Departure.

During this final stage, the hero confronts the Threshold Guardian in person and must be swallowed into the Belly of the Whale before she may, finally, cross the First Threshold. Campbell tells us that, in order to do so, the hero must surrender to a 'form of self-annihilation' during which she 'may be said to have died to time and returned to the World Womb' (1993:91-92), the 'Belly of the Whale' being a watery void or magical space that signifies 'a sphere of rebirth' (1993:90). The test lies in whether or not the hero returns from this void. In Lee's tale, Oaive tracks Grey to a large lake, steals a rowing boat and sets out after him. Seeing her, he calls up a storm so that 'it was as if a whale thrashed under [Oaive's] boat' (95). Then 'the whale did rise' (95), her boat is capsized and she spills into the lake. Oaive blacks out, the chapter ends and the reader intuitively feels a pause in events. Lee uses imagery here that corresponds specifically to the monomyth as Campbell describes it: Oaive is swallowed by the water which has been churned into a whale-like creature by the Threshold Guardian and 'dies' to time.

The next sequence continues to illustrate Oaive's adherence to the monomyth as Grey, the Threshold Guardian, becomes more teacher and mentor, than adversary. Grey's voice calls to Oaive through the oblivion, daring her to wake-up. In the tale, he pulls her from the water onto his ship and the imagery of the scene is provocative: his rope is an umbilical cord and the red paint of the ship recalls the blood of birth. In the Belly, Oaive must choose between death or life, anonymity or heroic responsibility. When she wakes, she is reborn and Grey acknowledges the significance of her choice, entrusting her with his real name: Cyrdin. This is important because his name gives her power over him. Having chosen the heroic path, the Threshold Guardian is no longer the hero's adversary but is openly her teacher and equal. At the same time, masculine and male, Grey continues to represent Oaive's dialogue with her animus so that the final lesson of the Threshold Guardian is specifically to do with masculine agency. Grey tells Oaive: 'You are the sorceress, not your instruction. Don't limit yourself' (49). Reborn from the Belly of the Whale, Oaive claims masculine agency as hers by right, and acknowledges that she is the source of her power. The hero's individuation is complete: she has Departed from home and the (inter-) dependency it represents.

The second stage of the monomyth is the Initiation, which is comprised of the Road of Trials, the Meeting with the Goddess, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and the Ultimate Boon (Campbell 1993:97-174). If the Departure traces the hero's struggle to achieve individuation, the Initiation requires the hero to navigate a greater variety of psychological challenges: he or she must resolve shadow issues; engage with aspects of the archetypal feminine; and determine his or her relationship to power, represented by the Father. Campbell suggests that this section of the monomyth represents the hero's journey into personal darkness, along the 'crooked lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth' so as to 'transmute the infantile images of [his] personal past' (1993:101). Each of the Trials along the Road thus correspond to the fears of the specific hero and, by extension, the shadows his or her society needs him or her to face. If the hero successfully navigates these trials, resolving the issues they represent, he or she achieves an apotheosis: an understanding of Self in relation to God/existence. This translates into self-actualisation and an insight

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into being, which is the Ultimate Boon the hero then offers his or her society. As in the Departure, Lee's tale follows the monomyth faithfully through the Initiation stage so that Oaive navigates precisely the same trials expected of the archetypal hero.

Grey continues on his journey to deliver the bone to his master, and Oaive follows behind – walking the Road of Trials. A mountain range forms the boundary of Grey's kingdom, so that Oaive enters it through 'a passage, black-chill but not long, which [worms] through the mountain' (57), and emerges to find the mountains '[stand] in a rank like teeth set in the jaw of the land' (58). Symbolically, this dark passage signifies the journey into a deeper understanding of self. The imagery is curiously predatory, the gullet and teeth suggesting that she has been devoured, swallowed into a place from which there is no easy escape. The blighted landscape Oaive traverses reinforces this sense of threat and desolation, as does her destination – a dead forest that calls out in a 'wail of pain' (59), and in which she finds the empty shell of a house. Like the tortured forest and the blighted wasteland, the house is dead. The image of a wasteland is common to this point in the hero's journey and generally indicates an imbalance resulting from the abuse of power and the defeat of virtue. In psycho-symbolic terms, the wasteland also represents the hero's world, reflecting the shadow-belief or fear that life is meaningless, that those in power have destroyed everything good. It falls to the hero to right this imbalance and restore meaning through the choices he or she makes along the Road: redemptive cosmogenesis lies in the hero's hands

In Lee's tale, Oaive must confront the cause of the blight: Niwus, the spirit that controls Grey's kingdom. This meeting is her opportunity to undergo Atonement with the Father. In the monomyth, the hero learns about power and power dynamics from the Father. He or she faces the 'Source' of power and learns that heroic authority lies in mercy and the surrender of ego rather than in the trappings of, and behaviour generally associated with, material influence. Niwus, however, represents the ogre-aspect of the Father, and thus the abuse of power. He is the tyrant Holdfast whose reign is absolute, restricting growth and change because he has not been 'purged of all inappropriate infantile cathexes' (Campbell 1993:146). Niwus's unresolved 'infantile cathexes' are reflected in his fear of death: he possesses newly-dead bodies in order to prolong his existence. Various events in the tale attest to his selfishness and cruelty, establishing that he wields power like a sharpened weapon. Given the symbolic connection of King and land, wherever the king is an ogre-tyrant, the land is blighted. The fact that the kingdom is a wasteland therefore warns Oaive to be wary of the Father's masculine power when it is not tempered by the feminine qualities of wisdom and mercy; this is the lesson she takes from Atonement with the Father. In order to heal Grey's kingdom, she must restore the balance between masculine and feminine 'power'.

It is thus apropos that the next trial Oaive undergoes is the Meeting with the Goddess. Lee weaves Oaive's Meeting with the Goddess into a tightly spiralling narrative arc that returns her to the ocean Shrine. This return to the Shrine of the Cosmic Mother enables Oaive to contrast the feminine authority associated with her duties as priestess and the way in which Niwus wields the masculine power of the Father. This is an important moment in the contrasexual education of the hero because, where the first stage of the monomyth urged Oaive to integrate masculine agency into her self-concept, Atonement with the Father warns against allowing masculinity or masculine aggression to dominate the way in which she interacts with the world. Oaive's Meeting with the Goddess offers an opportunity to balance masculinity and femininity, reminding her of the value of her feminine strengths.

In the tale, Niwus taunts Oaive with the bone Grey stole from the Shrine, admitting that it is the only threat to his immortality. He wants her to destroy it, but when he gives it to Oaive it is 'like regaining her lost child' (71). The bone connects her with the Cosmic Mother, drawing her into a communion with 'all the priestesses who had ever served the shrine' (79), and drawing her through time back to the Shrine. Campbell describes this episode thus: 'the hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female

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figure, by whose magic he is protected through the horrifying experiences of the father's ego-shattering initiation' (1993:130-131). In this moment, the archetypal force of the feminine counters the Father's authority and Oaive escapes Niwus.

Her link with the bone, the community of priestesses and her return to the Shrine together constitute Oaive's Meeting with the Goddess. She has been taken back to the era in which the Shrine is born, and the temporal distance between her and Niwus offers a respite during which she can contemplate events. She becomes the first priestess, establishing the rituals of the Shrine and introducing the duties of the priestesses – which she will learn one day in the future. As she takes care of the villagers here in the past, she harks back to the feminine skills she practised before undertaking the hero's journey and acknowledges the value of both her masculine and feminine skills. During this period Oaive engages with the benevolent aspect of the Goddess, the Mother who offers a home to which the hero may return, a sanctuary after the terrible rigors of the world. But, because death is also the purview of the Goddess, she also requires Oaive to accept that the quest may claim her life (Campbell 1993:111). The Meeting with the Goddess thus serves a dual purpose in the monomyth: it offers an opportunity to engage with the feminine, and it asks the hero to confront the reality of his or her mortality. The hero must be willing to continue despite the fact that her death is probable. Here in the past, Oaive begins to understand that a temporal game is being played out between her and Niwus, that she is the only one who can prevent him from destroying Grey's kingdom, and that she might not survive the attempt. She makes the heroic choice to meet the ogre-tyrant, regardless of what the outcome will be.

As the tale draws to its climax, Niwus and Grey follow Oaive into the past. Having earned Grey's real name, she uses it to free him from bondage and directs him to decapitate Niwus whom she holds frozen in time. At this moment Oaive's Initiation is complete and she achieves Apotheosis. The Apotheosis is a complex concept, part insight and part victory. Campbell writes that 'the ogre breaks us, but the hero, the fit candidate, undergoes the initiation "like a man"' (1993:161), facing and defeating the Father in his form as ogre-tyrant. In her victory over Niwus, the authority and power of the Father pass to Oaive, who '[experiences], for the first time and to the full, the might of her own sorcery' (81). However, Oaive realises that when Grey decapitates Niwus, the sword severs a small piece of finger from her hand which will become the bone relic of the Shrine, the same relic that calls to Niwus in the future. He may thus be dead in this time, but Oaive has not defeated the Father-tyrant because her world is doomed to repeat this cycle of events, as it has countless times before. The insight in Oaive's Apotheosis is her recognition that the cycle repeats because every time she has reached this moment before, she has chosen the wrong path for selfish reasons.

Campbell writes that, superficially, the stories of heroes may explore our infantile 'fantasies of restitution, (...) indestructability and protection against "bad" forces from within and without' (1993:174) but the Ultimate Boon that the hero brings her people pushes us beyond these childish fantasies into 'the yonder void' (180): the archetypal hero must suffer disintegration on our behalf in order to direct us to that which is Imperishable, because the Imperishable offers more hope than the fulfilment of our fantasies. In the novella Oaive's defeat of Niwus is gratifying but short-lived. If the cyclical pattern remains undisrupted Niwus will rule again, the world will be blighted, and the feminine magic of the Shrine will remain contained, separate and unable to balance the power of the ogre-tyrant Father. For the hero to offer her people the Ultimate Boon, a new beginning – a cosmogenesis – she must sacrifice herself.

The hero brings the Ultimate Boon back to her people upon her Return from the quest, which is the third and final stage of the monomyth. Few heroes undergo all the challenges Campbell lists under the Return because it is often a simple process, as it is for Oaive. Of course, the hero may Refuse the Return, choosing to remain in the realm of Nirvana, in which case her people never receive the Ultimate Boon.

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This is the choice Oaive has made over and over before: she has fallen in love with Grey and chooses to stay with him in the past, one happy life with him offsetting the misery of a future that she can dismiss in the past. To become an archetypal hero, Oaive must sacrifice this Nirvana and prioritise heroic duty over love. This time she accepts her responsibility and crosses the Return Threshold, a journey through time into the future to prevent Niwus from possessing the body that returns him to life. Her ability to do this indicates that she has become the Master of Two Worlds, earning the ‘freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and back’ (Campbell 1993:229). Her access to the causal deep allows her to rewrite fate: Niwus is not embodied, history is rewoven – and her world undergoes a cosmogenesis. Having completed her quest, Oaive then disappears into the mountains of Grey’s kingdom to live and die in lonely anonymity. Her heroic journey ends here.

However, Lee includes a short epilogue in which she allows the reader a glimpse of Oaive’s world post-cosmogenesis. Temporally, we return to the beginning of the story but to a changed world. There is no longer a shrine in the fishing village and rather than there being a single priestess there are many witches, revealing that various kinds of masculine and feminine authority are acceptable in this society. Before, Oaive was alone, rejected even by her mother but now she has friends her age and “[t]hough Oaive’s mother had not been a witch, they had been close’ (101). Witches may marry and have children. In this tableau a young man, all grey, arrives at the Shrine to court Oaive and we are told that the courtship won’t be long (104). The epilogue presents the reader with a healthy world that does not need a hero to right any imbalance of power and save it from destruction.

This brief and focused reading of *The winter players* thus traces Oaive’s successful navigation of the monomyth. It shows that a female character may perform the function of the archetype because Oaive executes all the tasks and meets all the challenges of the archetypal hero. She integrates the traits of her masculine animus into her Self, achieving the individuation championed by the hero. Then she faces the ogre-tyrant and learns that it is necessary to balance the aggression of the masculine with the feminine traits of nurturing and selflessness. She does this and, in the process, achieves the wisdom and breadth-of-vision inherent in self-actualisation. She sacrifices her life to save Grey’s kingdom, embodying heroic duty as nobly as any hero might and ushering in the cosmogenesis of a new world. It would be disingenuous to say that this novella cannot be read from the perspective of a female hero defying patriarchal culture to establish a more gender-equal society; Oaive does this. But this is not all she does: she saves Grey and the world beyond the Shrine from Niwus; her heroism is not limited to the defiance of outdated gender norms, it encompasses the rescue of her world from a generalised evil. My argument, therefore, is that one can study this tale solely from the perspective of archetypal heroism. This is a necessary counterpoint to those studies that foreground the biological sex or femininity of a female hero when neither need affect the hero’s navigation of the monomyth. For the archetypal credibility of the female hero to be realised, discussions of her action cannot continue to be limited to feminist narratives of women’s liberation. Neither can biological sex continue to be conflated with femininity or masculinity, adjectives that describe behavioural patterns or archetypal traits articulated across male and female bodies. I contend that in a discussion of heroism, Oaive’s sex should be beside the point: we do not celebrate her because she is a woman but because she is a hero.

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